



Linguistic Landscape and Cultural Identity of Sanjai Shop Signs in Bukittinggi

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Abstract

Linguistic landscape refers to the visibility of languages in public spaces through written signs that reflect both communication and identity. This study examines the linguistic landscape and cultural identity of *Sanjai* shop signs in Bukittinggi and its surrounding areas, including Agam Regency. Using a descriptive qualitative method, data were collected through direct observation, documentation using photographs, and interviews with shop owners. The study focuses on the languages and symbols appearing on the shop signs and their meanings. The results show that *Sanjai* shop signs feature monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual expressions. The monolingual signs use Minangnese, Indonesian, or Batakese, while the bilingual signs combine Minangnese and Indonesian. Bilingual signs serve to convey both local identity and product appeal to a wider audience. The use of Batakese in border areas illustrates language adaptation along major trade routes like the Trans-Sumatra Highway. Non-linguistic signs such as *Rumah Gadang* motifs, *Jam Gadang* images, *Sianok Canyon* pictures, and *Marawa* colors strengthen the cultural identity of Minangkabau. The study concludes that *Sanjai* shop signs are not only commercial tools but also media for preserving and promoting Minangkabau cultural identity through both linguistic and visual elements.

Keywords: Linguistic landscape, Cultural identity, Sanjai Shop Signs

Abstrak

Lanskap linguistik merujuk pada keberadaan bahasa-bahasa yang terlihat di ruang publik melalui tanda-tanda tertulis yang mencerminkan komunikasi sekaligus identitas. Penelitian ini mengkaji lanskap linguistik dan identitas budaya pada papan nama toko Sanjai di Bukittinggi dan sekitarnya, termasuk Kabupaten Agam. Dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, dokumentasi berupa foto, dan wawancara dengan pemilik toko. Penelitian ini berfokus pada tanda linguistik dan nonlinguistik yang muncul pada papan nama toko serta maknanya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa papan nama toko Sanjai menampilkan ungkapan monolingual dan bilingual. Tanda monolingual menggunakan bahasa Minang, bahasa Indonesia, atau bahasa Batak, sedangkan tanda bilingual menggabungkan bahasa Minang dan bahasa Indonesia. Tanda bilingual berfungsi untuk menyampaikan identitas lokal sekaligus daya tarik produk kepada khalayak yang lebih luas. Penggunaan bahasa Batak di wilayah perbatasan menggambarkan adaptasi bahasa di sepanjang jalur perdagangan utama seperti Jalan Lintas Sumatera. Tanda non-linguistik seperti motif Rumah Gadang, gambar Jam Gadang, foto Ngarai Sianok, dan warna Marawa memperkuat identitas budaya Minangkabau. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa papan nama toko Sanjai tidak hanya sebagai alat komersial, tetapi juga sebagai media untuk melestarikan dan mempromosikan identitas budaya Minangkabau melalui unsur linguistik maupun visual.

Kata kunci: Lanskap linguistik, Identitas budaya, Papan Nama Toko Sanjai





INTRODUCTION

Human communicates by using signs. There are two signs used to express all aspects of human life. They are linguistic signs and non-linguistic signs. The linguistic signs can be spoken and written languages. Otherwise, the non-linguistic signs can be body language and non-body language, for instance, pictures, symbols, and colors. Virtually no human activities occur without the presence of signs. Those signs also appear in the public spaces.

Several examples of the use of signs in public spaces within a commercial context can be seen in the names of shops, restaurants, hotels, etc. Those commercial signs appear to attract attention to a product (Backhaus, 2006). Therefore, the signs on these establishments are designed to be as attractive as possible. To make public space signage appealing, a combination of *linguistic* and *non-linguistic* signs is used. One particularly interesting example of public signage is the signs found on *Sanjai* shop signs.

Sanjai is a type of cracker made from grated cassava, which is then fried. It originated from Bukittinggi. The name *Sanjai* was actually derived from the name of the region where the cracker was first made. *Sanjai* is a neighborhood in Bukittinggi, specifically located in *Kelurahan Manggis Gantiang*. The use of a regional name for this food is not without reason. According to historical records, the residents of *Sanjai* were the first to produce cassava crackers in the Bukittinggi area in the 1970s. Later, this cassava cracker became widely known as *karupuak sanjai*. As the snack gained popularity as a *signature souvenir* from Bukittinggi, more cassava cracker producers emerged—not only in Bukittinggi but also spreading across other areas in *West Sumatra*, such as *Agam Regency*. *Agam Regency* borders Bukittinggi directly, which is why many *Sanjai* shops are found not only in Bukittinggi but also in Agam.

Sanjai shop signs contain the linguistic signs, for example the shop names, the product descriptions and attraction phrases. Moreover, the non-linguistic signs consist of labels, pictures, and colors. Those signs are not only a tool for communication but also a powerful medium for expressing identity, culture, and values. One linguistic study perspective that can be used to examine the shop signs in public spaces is the *linguistic landscape* approach. According to Landry (1997:25), linguistic landscape is:

"The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration."

In other words, *linguistic landscape* refers to the spread of language in public spaces, which can take the form of *linguistic* and *non-linguistic* signs within a specific area. The study on linguistic landscape especially in shop signs has been conducted, both internationally and in Indonesia. Al-Kharabsheh, et al (2009), Trumper-Hecht (2009), Akindele (2011), Amer and Obeidat (2014), Kartika (2019), and Mubarak and Muthalib (2021) investigated the multilingualism. From these studies, multilingualism emerges as a result of globalization. This perspective differs slightly from the linguistic landscape studies conducted by Oktavianus (2019) and Erikha (2018). Oktavianus (2019) examined the *linguistic landscape* from a cultural identity perspective, specifically focusing on the naming of *Minangkabau restaurants* in various regions of Indonesia. Erikha (2018), on the other hand, discussed street names along the main royal road in Yogyakarta. These names are also accompanied by *Hanacaraka script*. Symbolically, the presence of the Hanacaraka script indicates that the area is a community residence that reflects the language and script represented on the signs. In essence, these street signs possess strong identity symbolism and convey local wisdom. The street names on the main royal road are a part of a philosophical





chain constructed by the Yogyakarta palace: *Sangkan Paraning Dumadi*, which refers to the cycle of human life. This meaning is embedded in and conveyed through the naming of the streets.

Unlike previous studies, this research aims to identify and explain the *linguistic landscape* of Sanjai shops as well as the *cultural identity* embedded in their shop signs. While earlier research focused on various types of shops within a certain region, this study concentrates specifically in Sanjai shops. Furthermore, the scope of this study is narrower than that of Oktavianus's research, focusing specifically on Bukittinggi and its surrounding areas, such as Cingkariang, Padanglua, Jambu Aia, and Tanjung Alam. The goal is to explore the values reflected in the Sanjai shops located in their place of origin, Bukittinggi.

METHOD

This is descriptive qualitative research. The subject of the study is the shop signs in Bukittinggi and Agam. The research data consists of the linguistics and nonlinguistics signs in the shop signs. The method used for data collection is the observational method. In using this method, the researcher employed several techniques. The basic technique used is the tapping technique, which involved capturing the linguistic and nonlinguistic sign on store labels by using a cellphone. Furthermore, to gain a deep understanding of the values, an advanced technique called the engaged observation technique was applied through interviews with store owners. During the interviews, recordings were made using a mobile phone, and notes were taken. The method used for data analysis in this research is the matching method, specifically the referential matching method and the pragmatic method.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The Language Used on Shop Signs

The languages of shop signs are categorized into monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual signs. In terms of monolingual shop signs, the data indicated that *Minangnese* is the common monolingual language used on the name of shop signs. Look Figure 1 and 2.



Figure 1. Sanjai Dunsanak (Source: Tia Kharina Elvonny)



Figure 2. Sanjai Mintuo (Source: Tia Kharina Elvonny)

From Figure 1 and 2 can be seen the name of the shops are *Dunsanak* and *Mintuo*. *Dunsanak* ‘relatives’ and *Mintuo* ‘father/mother-in-law’ are nouns. Those words are *Minangkabau* kinship terms. The use of *Minangkabau* kinship terms in naming shops is an interesting aspect of the linguistic landscape, particularly in cultural and commercial contexts. In *Minangkabau*, kinship terms such as *Uni/Ni* ‘big sister’, *Amak/Mak* ‘mother’, and *Apak* ‘father’ are commonly used in the names of shops, restaurants, and other businesses. This naming give a warm and welcoming impression, making customers feel like part of the family or community.

The other monolingual language appeared in Sanjai Shop signs is Indonesian (Figure 3 and 4).



Figure 3. Sanjai Berkah (Source: Tia Kharina Elvonny)

The figure 3 shows a Sanjai shop sign named *Berkah*. *Berkah* most commonly translated into grace/blessing. The use of *berkah* (blessing) in shop names often reflects the owner's hopes for prosperity, protection, and goodwill, serving both spiritual and commercial functions. It conveys a desire for divine favor, while also establishing a trustworthy and humble brand image.

Despite the widespread influence of globalization and the increasing presence of English in public spaces worldwide, Sanjai shop signs retain a strong preference for indigenous and national languages in their shop names. The absence of English in these signs reflects a conscious or unconscious effort to preserve cultural authenticity, maintain local identity, and appeal to domestic consumers who value familiarity and tradition. Rather than



adopting English for prestige or modern appeal, these businesses often use Minangkabau kinship terms or Indonesian phrases that resonate more deeply with their community. This linguistic choice suggests that, in certain contexts, cultural rootedness and local pride outweigh the global trend of English commodification in branding.

Lastly, the monolingual found in Sanjai shop signs is Bataknese.

In terms of Sanjai shop signs, most of the shops used bilingual Minangnese-Indonesian (see Figure 4)



Figure 4. Sanjai Ayahanda (Source: Tia Kharina Elvonny)

Figure 4 shows that the bilingual Minangnese-Indonesian languages. The phrase *Sanjai Balado* in Minangnese means chili chips. The Minangnese phrase *Sanjai Balado* signals the cultural and regional authenticity of the product. It emphasizes local identity, tradition, and the unique flavor associated with Minangkabau cuisine. The words *Enak* and *Gurih* 'delicious and savory' serves to communicate the product's quality in a language that is widely understood by the local customers. It ensures that both local customers and visitors from other regions can understand the appeal of the product. This fits the informational function of linguistic signs.

The blending of Minangnese and Indonesian represents a form of written code-mixing, where two languages are combined in a single communicative space. This reflects the sociolinguistic reality of Bukittinggi, where speakers often shift between languages depending on audience and purpose. This bilingual approach broadens the audience reach. Minangnese attracts local pride and cultural connection, while Indonesian appeals to national or non-local consumers. This reflects the dual role of the sign: preserving local heritage while promoting commercial accessibility.



Figure 5. Silua Sanjai

Figure 5 shows the monolingual in the shop names. The word *Silua* is Bataknese. It means souvenirs. This Sanjai store located in the border of Bukittinggi and Agam, along the North Sumatra Highway. The use of Bataknese provides an interesting linguistic landscape



in mobility, multicultural interaction, and commerce. The presence of Bataknese on a shop sign in a predominantly Minangkabau area shows how language is used in response to patterns of movement along major trade routes. The Trans-Sumatra Highway connects West Sumatra to North Sumatra (where Bataknese is primarily spoken), so the use of Bataknese likely targets Bataknese travelers or traders passing through. This reflects how linguistic signs adapt to the sociolinguistic ecology of transit spaces. From a sociolinguistic economy perspective, the use of Bataknese on a shop sign can be seen as a marketing tool. It is a way to connect emotionally and culturally with a specific consumer group. It also shows how language choice in commerce is influenced by geography (border area) and infrastructure (major highway).

The Cultural Identity in Sanjai Shop Signs

Every ethnic group in the world express their own cultures in their ways like food is a cultural product to unite people and has significant soft power (Hussin, H, 2018, 2019). The forms of *Rumah Gadang* (Minangnese traditional house), the design of *pakaian adat*, the kind of tools used for all activities, and the iconic landmark of the region are different from one ethnic group to the others. In case of Sanjai shop signs, both the linguistic and nonlinguistic signs reflected the identity of *Minangkabau* culture. In the linguistic signs, most of the shop names used Minangnese kinship terms, such as *Mintuo* (see figure 1), *Dunsanak* (see figure 2), *Uni/Ni*, *Amak/Mak*, etc. Moreover, the product names also used Minangnese (see figure 6).



Figure 6. Sanjai Ayahanda (Source: Tia Kharina Elvonny)

Figure 6 shows the product names in Minangnese, i.e *Rubik*, *Galamai*, *Dakak-Dakak*, and *Batiah*. Traditional food names are often keep in their original language because they carry deep cultural and historical values. These names are more than just labels, they reflect the identity, heritage, and even the story behind the dish. Many traditional foods have unique preparation methods, ingredients, and meanings that don't translate easily into other languages. Using original names also helps preserve authenticity and connects people to their roots. Food is a powerful way to express culture, and keeping the name intact allows people, especially those from outside the culture to appreciate and experience it in its true form. Furthermore, some food names have gained worldwide recognition, making translation unnecessary. Words like "rendang," "nasi goreng," and "mie goreng" are understood



internationally, showing how food can transcend language barriers while keeping its original identity.

The nonlinguistic signs used as the identity of Minangkabau in Sanjai shop signs are dominated by the logos, pictures, and designs of *Rumah Gadang* (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Sanjai Nina (Source: Tia Kharina Elvonny)

Non-linguistic signs as Minangkabau cultural identity is indicated by putting the logo of *Rumah Gadang* roof before the shop names *OLEH-OLEH MINANG SANJAI BALADO*. Although Sanjai shop signs is located in Minangkabau, cultural identity is still indicated by using the logo of *Rumah Gadang*. Besides the logo, the picture of real *Rumah Gadang* also appeared in the shop signs. The owner put the picture of *Rumah Gadang* stacked on the top corner of the signs with *Jam Gadang* and two people wearing with the traditional clothes from Minangkabau. The other nonlinguistic sign indicating the cultural identity is the picture of the famous landmark in Bukittinggi- *Jam Gadang*. It indicated more specific of the cultural identity of the origin of Sanjai itself.

The other cultural identity from the nonlinguistic signs in Sanjai shop signs is the picture of Sianok Canyon. Sianok Canyon is also the famous tourism place not only for domestic visitors, but also international tourists (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Sanjai Bundo (Source: Tia Kharina Elvonny)

Figure 8 shows the picture of Sianok Canyon as the background of the shop signs. By incorporating the picture into shop signs, Sanjai sellers create a strong association between their product and Bukittinggi's heritage, making it more appealing to both locals and tourists. It's a clever way to market traditional snacks while celebrating the city's identity.

The cultural identity also indicated by the design of the shop names. The arrangement of the shop names imitates the form of *Rumah Gadang* roof. The shop name, *MINANG*



MAIMBAU, resembles the word to look like the roof of the traditional house of Minangkabau, with each of its corners made pointed (Figure 1)



Figure 9. Sanjai Minang Maimbau (Source: Tia Kharina Elvonny)

The landscape of Minangkabau cultural identity is also indicated through the form or construction of the building used in Sanjai stores. The building imitates or follows the style of Rumah Adat Minang. The building is modified as Sanjai shop by adding the roof arch of Rumah Adat Minang in the front part of the building or gate of the building as in the following example, figure 10



Figure 10. Sanjai Gonjong (Source: Tia Kharina Elvonny)

The above picture is Sanjai Gonjong in Jambu Air. The landscape of the cultural identity is presented through the design of the pointed roof of *Rumah Gadang* in the front part of the store. The reasons of the owner using the design of the building to match the name *Gonjong* with the design of the store. *Gonjong* is Minangnese term of the *Rumah Gadang*



roof. From the picture above, the cultural identity presented both from the design and the names.

Lastly, the nonlinguistic signs represented the cultural identity of Minangkabau is from the color used. Minangkabau has its own flag called *Marawa*. *Marawa* usually used in celebrating some traditional ceremony. The colors of *Marawa* are red, yellow, and black. Each color carries its own meaning. Black is considered a symbol of soil, representing the origin of human existence in Islamic belief. Red signifies blood or the continuous flow of passion and determination. If a person lives with full enthusiasm and is willing to struggle tirelessly, they will eventually reach a golden era of success, symbolized by yellow. One of the shop sign used the *Marawa* color is Sanjai Nikmat (Figure 11).



Figure 11. Sanjai Nikmat (Source: Tia Kharina Elvonny)

The picture above shows the shop sign in Bukittinggi named Sanjai Nikmat. It used the color of *Marawa*-yellow, red, and black. From the shop signs, there is no indicating of cultural identity through the logo, picture, or design, but it just used the color to represent the Minangkabau cultural identity.

Sanjai shop signs reflect cultural identity through both linguistic and non-linguistic elements. The use of traditional names and symbols maintains a strong connection to local heritage, reinforcing authenticity and recognition. Linguistically, original names and descriptive phrases uphold the cultural significance of the product, making it uniquely tied to its origin. Non-linguistically, visual elements such as the Rumah Gadang-shaped designs, iconic landmarks like Jam Gadang and Sianok Canyon, and meaningful color symbolism further emphasize local traditions. Together, these elements create a powerful representation of West Sumatran identity, preserving and promoting its rich cultural heritage.

CONSLUSION

The linguistic landscape of *Sanjai* shop signs in Bukittinggi and its surroundings reflects a strong integration of local culture and commercial communication. The shop signs use Minangnese kinship terms and traditional product names to affirm Minangkabau identity, while Indonesian ensures accessibility for a broader audience. The presence of Bataknes language in border areas indicates linguistic adaptation to mobility and intercultural interaction along major trade routes. Non-linguistic elements, including *Rumah Gadang* designs, iconic landmarks, and *Marawa* colors, further strengthen the expression of Minangkabau cultural identity. These findings highlight that the linguistic and visual choices



in shop signage are not only marketing strategies but also tools for preserving cultural heritage in public spaces.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that future researchers expand the scope of linguistic landscape studies to include other commercial and public spaces beyond *Sanjai* shops to provide a broader understanding of how cultural identity is maintained through signage. Moreover, local governments and tourism boards should consider supporting the preservation of traditional linguistic and visual elements on shop signs as part of efforts to promote regional heritage and cultural tourism. Shop owners are also encouraged to continue integrating local languages and symbols in their signage to strengthen community identity and cultural pride.

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